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ABSTRACT

The goals of this SPEC Kit were to report on the extent to which ARL (Association of Research Libraries) libraries provide electronic reference services and to offer a snapshot of the types of users reached, questions received, policies established, data-gathering techniques utilized, and innovations implemented. The first section of the kit provides an executive summary, a copy of the tabulated results from the questionnaire, and a list of responding institutions. Representative documents include: electronic reference World Wide Web sites from the University of Arizona, Brown University (Rhode Island), University of California-Irvine, Case Western Reserve University (Ohio), University of Colorado, University of Connecticut, Dartmouth College (New Hampshire), Indiana University, University of Maryland, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Miami (Florida), University of Michigan, Michigan State University, University of New Mexico, University of Pennsylvania, Temple University (New Jersey), Yale University (Connecticut), and York University (Canada); and electronic reference policies, reports, and statistics from Columbia University (New York), the University of North Carolina, the University of Waterloo (Canada), and Yale University. Contains selected resources, including books, journal articles, Web sites, and listservs. (MES)

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SPEC Kit 251

Electronic Reference Service

October 1999

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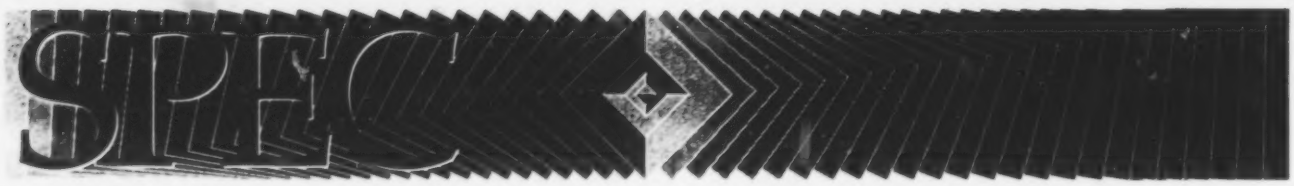

Electronic Reference Service

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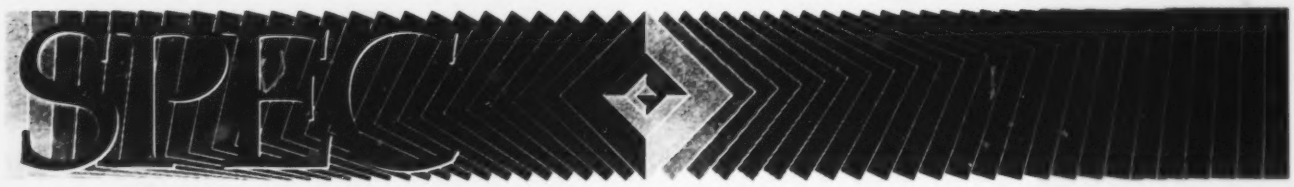

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Electronic Reference Service
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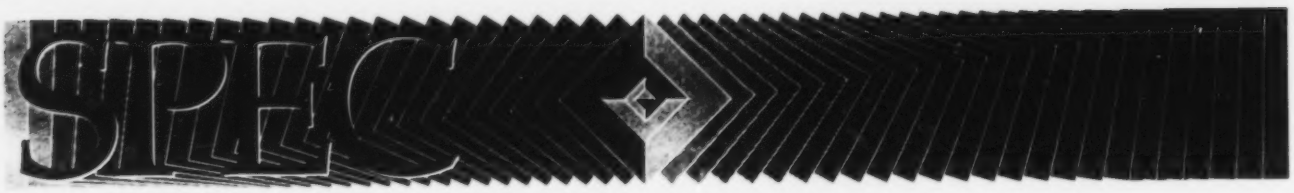

SURVEY

Executive Summary

Introduction

Research libraries are increasingly committed to using computer technology for everything from online catalogs to "friends of the library" retail stores. Reference librarians have found many ways to take advantage of technology in extending service beyond the walls of the library. One approach growing in popularity is reference service through electronic mail and web forms.

Library literature demonstrates the growing interest in exploring the benefits of and barriers to delivering reference service by electronic means. Areas of research and writing include the electronic reference interview, delivery of instructional tutorials via electronic methods, and analyses of individual libraries' experiences with electronic reference service. Despite this interest, a comprehensive picture of the implementation of electronic reference services in ARL libraries has not been available.

The goals of this SPEC Kit were to report on the extent to which ARL libraries provide electronic reference services and offer a snapshot of the types of users reached, questions received, policies established, data-gathering techniques utilized, and innovations implemented.

For purposes of this survey, electronic reference was defined as reference service designed for remote users and identified by a specific link from a library's website. Electronic reference queries that come directly to individuals or via other library web links were not included in the definition.

Extent of Electronic Reference Service

Seventy-eight of the 122 ARL member libraries responded to the electronic reference service survey (64% of the total membership). Seventy-five (96% of respondents) reported offering electronic reference, while three (4%) do not. For the 51 respondents who supplied data for the relevant survey question, an average of 7 reference questions are submitted via an electronic reference service each month. Those 51 respondents reported numbers ranging from 2.3 to 3,200 questions per month, with a median of 35. Closer examination of the data shows significant outliers to be the Library of Congress (2,500 questions per month) and the National Library of Medicine (3,200 questions per month). When the three national libraries are removed from the calculation, the average number of questions submitted monthly via electronic reference service is 67.

Characteristics

While still a recent phenomenon, the growth of electronic reference has been developing over a number of years. Very few of these programs are new: 22 (30%) of the programs are more than five years old, 37 (50%) fall into the three to five year range, nine (12%) are one to two years old, and six (8%) reported that they are less than one year old. Most libraries—54 or 75%—reported a gradual rate of increase in the number of questions since the service began. One (1%) reported a rapid increase, while 15 (21%) reported no increase, and two libraries (3%) reported a decrease in use of the service since its inception.

Most of the libraries—36 or 48%—link their electronic reference service at the top level of their libraries' web pages. Twenty-six (35%) reported

links on the second level, and 13 (17%) reported links on the third level or lower. Many libraries reported multiple locations for electronic reference links. Email is the most common method for submitting questions, even when users submit them through a web form.

Seventy-four of 75 respondents reported that potential users learn about the service from the library's home page. Other tactics are employed to advertise the service as well: 61 of the respondents noted library instruction activities; 52 respondents noted that service desk staff refer users to the service; and 37 utilize posters, flyers, and other written promotional materials. Even such creative promotional techniques as inclusion on the answering machine for the library hours and TV screen ads in the university community center were mentioned.

Thirty-eight (51%) of the libraries reported that they will accept any question. However, many libraries qualified this by saying that the library's response might be to suggest search strategies and sources, recommend that the patron meet with a librarian, or suggest that the question is not appropriate for an email response. Respondents mentioned excluding questions with foul language, requests for medical and legal information for personal use, questions that can be answered with resources generally available in local libraries, and broadcast queries that can be handled better by local public libraries. Thirty-one respondents (41%) accept only basic factual questions, but not included in this class are such items as requests for lists of factual information (for example, long lists of addresses or bibliographical information) or shelf checks for availability of materials.

Most respondents reported that the reference unit manages the electronic reference service. Teams within public services departments or cross-unit teams were mentioned as part of alternative management strategies for the electronic reference service. In some branch libraries where a reference unit does not exist, the librarians who provide reference assistance manage the electronic reference service.

Responsibility for answering questions is clearly decentralized. Twenty-six of 75 respondents described their environment as one in which responsibility rotates among several people on an established basis. Twenty-five described a situation where questions are received by a single individual and distributed to others. Seventy-one (95%) of the respondents reported that librarians are answering the electronic reference questions; 41 (55%) reported that support staff are participating in answering such questions; six (8%) reported using graduate assistants; two (3%) reported using student assistants; and two (3%) reported using other staff expertise such as computer science specialists or public affairs information specialists. Many libraries assign responsibility for answering electronic reference questions to librarians at the reference desk or on telephone reference duty. Others set up a triage system where basic questions are answered by librarians on the reference desk and others are forwarded to subject specialists. Some services allow users to choose the branch library or department to receive their question, so the staffing arrangement may vary by location.

Response time is a minor issue for the respondents. Twenty-nine (39%) of the libraries stated that they do not specify a guaranteed response time. Twenty-one (28%) libraries specify a response time of one day, and 14 (19%) specify two days.

Data Gathering and Assessment

Despite the current interest in assessment as a management tool, little information about users is being collected by ARL libraries in the area of electronic reference services. Most respondents (75%) collect the number of electronic reference questions, and 69% are including those questions in their general reference statistics. However, only 29 libraries (39%) are collecting user data. The user information that is collected includes:

- type of patron;
- type of question;
- time of day;
- affiliation of patron;
- response; and

- number of questions rejected as being outside of scope or policy.

Sixty-five of the libraries (87%) reported that they had performed no user assessment of their electronic reference service. Of the 10 who report conducting user assessment surveys (13%), both informal and formal assessment techniques have been utilized. Strategies for assessment have included questions on the service as part of a general library user survey and follow-up at the end of individual transactions.

Forty-six of the respondents (62%) reported that they maintain an archive of questions and responses. Email systems (e.g., Eudora, Pine) are used most commonly to archive questions and responses. Web-based database management systems, the Internet Public Library's software, and paper were mentioned as alternative archiving techniques. Of those who maintain an archive, the vast majority (91%) report that no part of that archive is publicly accessible.

Conclusion

This survey shows that electronic reference service has become an established form of reference delivery within ARL libraries. It is yet another example of libraries' efforts to exploit technology and provide services to remote users. Despite expressed fears of being overwhelmed by those users, the workload seems to be manageable thus far, but local policies control who is eligible to receive reference service electronically and what type or level of questions are answered via the service. The age and number of electronic reference services indicate a significant amount of experience in developing, managing, and running a remote user service, and most ARL libraries see the service as part of the reference unit. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of variation in staffing and managing strategies.

Little electronic reference assessment seems to be occurring. Most libraries are counting questions and adding them to their reference statistics. This strategy is simple given the email technology that most ARL libraries are using to deliver the service and create archives. Technological solutions beyond email might encourage and facilitate additional data collection and assessment. One useful area for further study would be to examine the way that patrons are using this service; for example, to what extent do their questions elicit a "no answer response" versus the answer to the question. Online user surveys clearly need to be conducted as well, but few ARL libraries are experimenting with interactive technologies, such as chat rooms, to deliver this kind of service. Hopefully, this situation will change because interactive technologies offer expanded opportunities for reference interviews as well as new possibilities for assessment.

SPEC Kit 251
Electronic Reference Service

Survey Results

Reference librarians have found many ways to take advantage of technology in extending service beyond the walls of the library. One approach that is growing in popularity is reference service by electronic mail and web forms. A cursory examination of ARL libraries' web pages indicates that many now provide a link to an electronic address or form for submitting reference questions. Some electronic reference services are limited to the university community served by the library or to particular types of easy-to-answer questions. Other services have broadened their scope to use electronic reference as a vehicle for reaching out to a wider community of users in the library's state, region, and beyond.

The library literature also demonstrates a growing interest in exploring the benefits of and barriers to delivering reference service by electronic means. Areas of research and writing include the electronic reference interview, delivery of instructional tutorials via electronic methods, and analyses of individual libraries' experiences with electronic reference service. Despite this interest, a comprehensive picture of the implementation of electronic reference services in ARL libraries is not yet available. This survey is intended to provide this snapshot and collect information on the types of users of the service, questions received, policies, data gathering, and innovations.

For purposes of this survey, electronic reference is defined as intentionally designed reference service for remote users identified by a specific link from a library's website. Electronic reference queries that come directly to individuals or other library web links are not included in this definition but are addressed in question 13 of the survey.

This survey was designed by Lori Goetsch, Director of Libraries for Public Services, University of Maryland, with the assistance of Laura Sowers, Reference Librarian, GCI Information Services, and Cynthia Todd, Coordinator, Information and Research Services, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland.

Please submit this survey and send the requested documentation by July 16, 1999. As always, individual responses to the survey will be treated confidentially.

Note: Seventy-eight of the 122 ARL member libraries (64%) responded to the survey.

1. Do you offer electronic reference?

Yes	75	96%
No	3	4%

If yes, how long has the service been offered?

Less than one year	6	8%
1–2 years	9	12%
3–5 years	37	50%
More than 5 years	22	30%

2. Where on your web page is the link to your electronic reference service?

Top level	36	48%
Second level	26	35%
Third level or lower	13	17%

If the link is not on the top level, under what heading(s) is it located?

Ask . . .
Forms/electronic requests
Help
Information
Reference services or resources
Services
Virtual reference services or desk

3. Users submit questions through:

Web form	17	23%
Email address	17	23%
Both	41	55%

If a web form, is the request then:

Delivered via email	56	97%
Written to a database	1	2%
Written to a file	1	2%
Other	0	

4. What types of questions do you accept?

Any question	38	51%
Basic factual questions	31	41%
In-depth research questions	1	1%
Other; please explain.	5	7%

All questions that can be answered without extensive interaction
Dependent on affiliation of questioner (2)
Don't answer in-depth but provide strategies or sources
Varies by unit

5. Please describe the types of questions that are not acceptable.

Document delivery or interlibrary loan
In-depth research
Lists
Medical, legal, genealogical
"Nonsense"
Reference interview required
Term paper research

6. Which of the following groups of people may ask reference questions? Check all that apply. (N=75)

Undergraduate students	73	97%
Graduate students	73	97%
Faculty	72	96%
Staff	68	91%
Friends of the library	50	67%
Alumni	49	65%
General public	49	65%
Other; please explain.	7	9%

Corporate partners
General public if question is specific to library or institution
Government agencies

7. If you only answer questions from a restricted group of people, do you make an exception for questions about special collections? (N=75)

Yes	30	40%
No/not applicable	45	60%

8. How do potential users of your service find out about it? Check all that apply. (N=75)

Library's homepage	74	99%
Library instruction activities	61	81%
Service desk staff	52	69%
Poster, flyers, other written promotional materials	37	49%
Campus newspaper	9	12%
Broadcast email to the university community	7	9%
Other; please explain.	14	19%

Campus support units (e.g., writing center)
Faculty outreach activities (e.g., newsletters, email, meetings)
Web links from nonlibrary pages

9. Within how many days do you guarantee a response?

No specific amount of time	29	39%
One day	21	28%
Two days	14	19%
Three days	1	1%
A week	2	3%
Other; please specify.	8	11%

Difference between response (as soon as possible) and answer
General guidelines but no guaranteed turnaround time
Response time is determined by number of business days

10. If you do guarantee a response time, how often do you meet that guarantee?

100% of the time	6	14%
90–99% of the time	34	77%
80–89% of the time	3	7%
Less than 80% of the time	1	2%

11. Do you collect statistics on the number of questions received through the electronic reference service?

Yes	56	75%
No	19	25%

If yes, what is the average number of questions per month?

Respondents	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
48*	67	2	550

**Figure excludes nonuniversity respondents.*

Please estimate the rate of increase of the number of questions since the service began.

Rapid increase	1	1%
Gradual increase	54	75%
Stable	15	21%
Decrease	2	3%

12. Do you collect other data on the electronic reference service (for example, category of patron, type of question, etc.)?

Yes	29	39%
No	46	61%

If yes, please list the categories of data collected. (N=30)

Type of patron	22	73%
Type of question	18	60%
Time of day	15	50%
Affiliation of patron	11	37%
Response time	11	37%
Number of questions rejected as being outside of scope or policy	6	20%
Other; please specify.	6	20%

Subject, nature, or type of question
Referrals made and to where
Questions not answered
Amount of time spent
User email address

13. Do you collect statistics on electronic reference questions answered from sources other than the electronic reference service?

Yes	22	31%
No	49	69%

If yes, what sources do you track? (N=23)

Individual librarians	14	61%
Webmaster link	12	52%
Branch libraries	9	39%
Special collections/archives	9	39%
Other; please specify.	4	17%

Partial only—main library webmaster and librarians
OPAC link
Homepage comments link

14. Do you include electronic reference statistics in your general reference statistics?

Yes	51	69%
No	23	31%

15. Who is responsible for responding to electronic reference questions received? (N=75)

Responsibility is rotated among several people on an established basis	26	35%
Questions are received by a single individual and distributed to others	25	33%
All questions are answered by a single person who is assigned responsibility for electronic reference	14	19%
Other; please specify.	19	25%

Basic questions are answered by reference librarians and others are forwarded to subject specialists
Questions are answered by librarians on duty at reference desk or telephone reference service
Staffing arrangement varies by location

16. What type(s) of staff respond to electronic reference questions? (N=75)

Librarians	71	95%
Support staff	41	55%
Graduate assistants	6	8%
Student assistants	2	3%
Other; please specify.	2	3%

Computer science specialists
Public affairs information specialists

17. Which best describes the administrative unit that manages the electronic reference service? (N=71)

Reference unit	66	93%
Web services unit or webmaster	6	8%
Electronic services unit	3	4%
Rotated among units or multiple units	0	
Other; please specify.	5	7%

Reference librarians
Teams within public services or cross-unit teams

18. Have you done any kind of user assessment of your electronic reference service?

Yes	10	13%
No	65	87%

If yes, please describe.

Follow-up with users at end of individual transactions
Formal and informal user satisfaction surveys

19. Do you keep an archive of questions and responses?

Yes	46	62%
No	28	38%

If yes, is any part of this archive publicly accessible?

Yes	4	9%
No	42	91%

20. What software are you using to archive questions and responses?

Web-based application	6	13%
Database manager	2	4%
Spreadsheet	2	4%
Other; please specify.	36	78%

Email systems (e.g., Pine, Eudora)
Web-based management systems
Help desk software (e.g., Internet Public Library)
Paper files

21. Do you offer any other forms of interactive electronic reference, such as chat rooms or videoconferencing?

Yes	3	4%
No	72	96%

If yes, please specify.

"Real Time Reference" using AOL's Instant Messenger Software
TalkBack (to be replaced by NetMeeting or other software for more flexibility)
Videoconferencing

22. Additional comments generally fell into the following two categories. A few comments supplement responses to the questions above.

Decentralization

Many additional comments centered around the decentralized nature of electronic reference service in the responding libraries. Libraries with large systems have branches that provide their own electronic reference service with policies and practices that vary widely.

Planned Changes

Several libraries noted upcoming changes in their electronic reference service including: more publicity; moving link to the first level of the library's web page; experimenting with other software (e.g., Internet Public Library); revision or establishment of policies; rethinking statistics; and archiving.

Responding Institutions

University of Alabama
University of Arizona
Arizona State University
University of British Columbia
Brown University
University of California–Davis
University of California–Irvine
University of California–Riverside
University of California–Santa Barbara
Case Western Reserve University
Center for Research Libraries
University of Colorado
Colorado State University
Columbia University
University of Connecticut
Cornell University
Dartmouth College
George Washington University
Georgetown University
University of Georgia
Georgia Institute of Technology
University of Guelph
University of Hawaii
University of Houston
Indiana University
University of Iowa
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Rutgers University
University of Saskatchewan
State University of New York at Buffalo
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Syracuse University
Temple University
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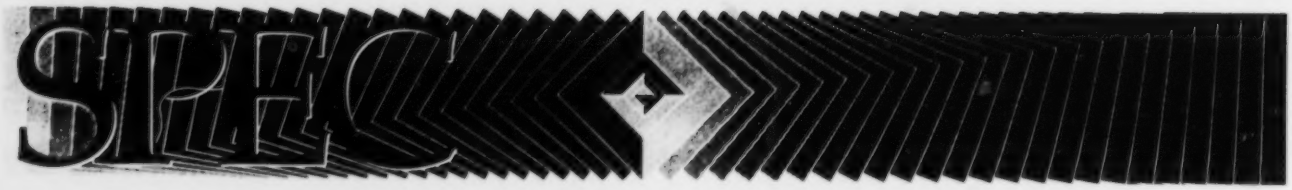
University of Texas
Texas Tech University
University of Utah
Vanderbilt University
University of Virginia
Virginia Tech
University of Washington
University of Waterloo
Wayne State University
University of Western Ontario
University of Wisconsin
Yale University
York University



Representative Documents

Electronic Reference Websites

http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu:80/library/type1/index/askref.html

The University of Arizona Library

Electronic Mail Reference Service

What is it?

E-mail reference service is designed to handle questions typically asked at the reference desk, such as questions about journal citations, phone numbers, definitions, etc. For example, we will provide up to three book titles or article citations. We cannot provide in-depth research through this service. In-depth questions will be referred to the appropriate subject specialist.

Who Can Use it?

Our primary customers are University of Arizona faculty, staff, and students with E-mail accounts. However, this service is also available to Friends of the University of Arizona Library and any person in the Tucson community with an E-mail account.

When to Expect a Response?

You will receive a response within 48 hours, Monday through Friday excluding holidays. For example, questions received on Friday will receive a response by the following Tuesday.

Questions requiring more in-depth research will be referred to the appropriate subject specialist, who will contact you directly. A referral may cause a slight delay in the response time.

How to Submit a Question?

If you have a reference question you would like to submit to the E-mail reference service and are a customer described in "Who can use it?" feel free to submit your question now. Please include your name and full e-mail address with your question so that we will be certain to be able to get an answer back to you.

If you have questions about using any of the university libraries, or if you have questions about the campus, you may prefer to browse or keyword search the library's file of Frequently Asked Questions about the UA Libraries.

Submit a question electronically

If you would like to find out more about the service, please contact the Main or Science-Engineering reference desks. Call Information at 621-6441.

Return to the **HELP page**

Return to the **U of A Library Home Page**

http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/University_Library/forms/AskReference.html

BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Online Forms

Ask a Reference Question

To reply to your question, we need the following information:

Your Name:

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Status: Choose a Status

Type Reference Question:

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http://www.lib.uci.edu/serv/ask.html

UCI Library Services
The UCI Libraries • University of California, Irvine

Library Home | ANTPAC | CDL/ MELVYL® | Library Hours | Guides & Tutorials | Visitor Center | Search This Site

New | Resources A-Z | Resources by Subj or Coll | Services | About | Internet

Ask a Question: e-mail reference service

Need help finding information? Can't figure out how to begin your research? Well, "Ask a Question!" We are here to help you! Fill out the form below and we will send you a response as soon as possible. This service is designed for UCI students, faculty, and staff. For more information on the "Ask a Question" s ervice **click here.**

Your name *(required)*

Your full e-mail address (e.g., **jsmith@uci.edu**) *(required)*

Your affiliation with UCI *(required)*

Select an affiliation

My question is:

Submit - **Submit your question** Clear -- **Start over**

[Back to Reference services page][top of page]

Who may ask a question?

- The "Ask a Question" service is intended for UCI students, faculty, and staff.
- If you are not affiliated with UCI, we can only respond to questions about the unique collections and resources of the UCI Libraries. See below for alternative resources.

What kinds of questions may I ask?

- Requests for brief factual or statistical information
- Questions about which resources to use (MELVYL® databases, the Internet, government information, etc.)
- Questions about the UCI Libraries resources, services, and facilities.

[Back to Reference services page][top of page]

Who will answer my question?

- Reference librarians and staff

When will I receive a response?

- Questions will be responded to as quickly as possible and always within 24 hours (excluding weekends and holidays).

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Suggested alternative resources

- Consult your local school or public library
- The Internet Public Library
- Pitsco's Ask an Expert
- UCI students, faculty, and staff may make an appointment through our Research Consultation Service at the Science Library, or the Main Library
- For further assistance you are welcome to visit one of our reference desks

[Back to Reference services page][top of page]

UCI Home ● Comments?

The UCI Libraries

http://www.lib.uci.edu
Last Updated:
September 29, 1999
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University of California

University of California
The UCI Libraries
P.O. Box 19557
Irvine, CA 92623-9557
(949) 824-6836

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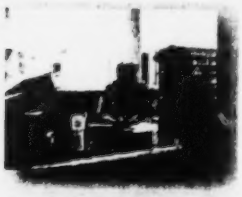
http://www.cwru.edu/UL/forms/refques.htm



LIBRARY HOMEPAGE

LIBRARY CATALOG
EUCLIDPLUS

OHIOLINK

SERVICES

REFERENCE DESK

ELECTRONIC
RESOURCES

SUBJECT GUIDES

KSLEARN
EDUCATION CLASSES

REQUEST FORMS

SEARCH

WHAT'S NEW??

SUGGESTIONS

Case Western Reserve University

University Library

Kelvin Smith Library - Kulas Music Library - Astronomy Library

QUICK REFERENCE QUESTION

You can submit a quick question such as "What is the number of Catholics in the United States," which will be answered by the general Reference Staff within 1-2 working days. Quick question

ASK A REFERENCE QUESTION

By completing the following form you can ask a question that is more in depth which would be answered by a specified subject specialist. (If you feel that your information needs cannot be meet via this form, you can make an appointment with a Reference Librarian and come into the Library or contact the Reference Desk (Phone 368-6596) (Fax 368-3669). To reply to your question, we need the following information.

Boxes with labels in **bold type** are **required** and must be completed in order for the transaction to be successful.

Patron Information

Name:[required]

E-mail:[required]

Phone#:[required]

Major (Students)/**Dept.** (Faculty & Staff):[required]

Status:

CWRU Faculty

Your Question

Question:

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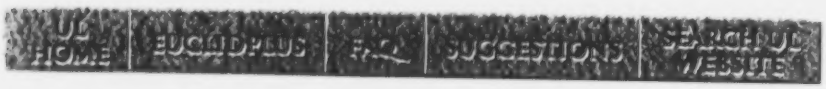
Send to ...

Please choose a Librarian to send to by NAME or by SUBJECT:

- Send your question to this Librarian:
- Send to the Librarian responsible for the subject area:

Send Form | Cancel

Further information on reference services.



Last modified on Monday, 19-Jul-99 13:27:05

jkh2@po.cwru.edu -- About this server -- Copyright 1994-99 CWRU -- Unauthorized use prohibited

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UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

SERVICES

REFERENCE

Research assistance

Libraries personnel are available on-site in the following departments to provide basic reference assistance in the access and use of the Libraries' collections:

- Archives
- Art & Architecture
- Business
- Central Reference
- Earth Sciences
- East Asian
- Engineering
- Government Publications
- Law
- Maps
- Math Physics
- Media
- Music
- Norlin
- Periodicals Room
- Science
- Special Collections

Hours vary by department.

Research services by appointment

In-depth reference consultations are available by appointment to discuss specific research or information needs:

- Peer Tutor Research Counseling Service
- Expanded Reference Service
- Colorado Technical Research Center

E-mail ready reference

Do you have a question and an e-mail account? Reference personnel will answer brief ready-reference questions and provide research guidance via e-mail. Individuals with lengthy and complex reference questions will be requested to come into the library for onsite reference assistance.

Subject specialists & bibliographers

Libraries faculty who are subject experts in specific academic disciplines are available for consultation to discuss research projects or problems.

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http://137.99.112.170/askHomer/about.cfm

The University of Connecticut **LIBRARIES**

About askHomer

What is askHomer?

askHomer is the University of Connecticut Libraries' electronic information and reference service. Request brief answers to factual questions, or browse through **the Knowledge Base of posted questions and answers.**

What kinds of questions will askHomer answer?

Ready reference, quick answer, and factual questions are appropriate for askHomer.

- To learn what books or journals the library owns, consult **UCAT**, the UConn Libraries Online Catalog.
- For electronic dictionaries, encyclopedias, and directories, consult the **Electronic Referece Shelf**.
- For questions involving extensive research or subject expertise, consult the **subject librarian** appropriate to your topic.
- For questions concerning connectivity, consult the **University Computer Center**.
- For technical assistance, see the **Library Technical Assistance Page**.
- To speak with a reference librarian, call (860) 486-2513 or **one of the special or regional campus libraries**.

Who can use askHomer?

The students, faculty, staff, and administrators of the University of Connecticut are the primary clients of askHomer. Connecticut residents are welcome to submit questions as well. Questions from outside the state will be handled as time allows.

How do I query askHomer?

Use the **Submit Question page**. Please be as detailed as you can when writing your question. If you wish to send a question anonymously, simply make sure that the check box marked "Would you like your personal information to appear in the Knowledge Base?" is checked "No." When your information gets inserted into the Answers Knowlege Base, your personal information (such as name and email address) will not be included.

When will I receive an answer?

Responses to questions are generally posted within 2 working days of the question being submitted, excluding holidays. For example, questions received on Friday will have answers posted by the following Tuesday.

---

askHomer II **version 1.01 rel 19990218.1001**

web search · **HOMER** · **feedback** · **UConnWeb** · **research** · **help**

library

© 1999, University of Connecticut Libraries
369 Fairfield Rd
Storrs, CT 06269
(860) 486-2219
www@www.lib.uconn.edu

Last updated
1999-01-28

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library.help/asklib.html

Dartmouth College Library

Ask a Librarian

Use this form to ask a reference question of a librarian at Dartmouth College. **This service is restricted to members of the Dartmouth community or to questions relating to Dartmouth College**. Be sure to include your email address so a librarian can respond to you. Your question will be forwarded to the appropriate library.

For all other questions, contact your local library for assistance or try the Internet Public Library.

Your question:

Your email address:

If you do not include a correct return address we cannot reply to your query.

Reset Submit

Search Library Catalog | DCIS | Search Library Web
The Libraries | Ask a Librarian | Dartmouth Home

Maintained by the library webmaster. Last update on November 6th, 1997

HOME

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http://www.indiana.edu/~libweb/question.html

IUB Libraries
IUCAT/Databases
IUB Info
Ask a librarian
Site Search

Indiana University Bloomington Libraries

Ask a librarian

Scroll down for questions AND ANSWERS about this service.

Your Full Email Address (e.g. smith@indiana.edu):

The Message: (Press **ENTER/RETURN** at the end of each line.)

Send Message

Who may use this service?

This service is intended for the students, faculty and staff of Indiana University, Bloomington. If you are not affiliated with IUB, we are sorry that we can reply to your inquiry only if it concerns Indiana University or some unique resource of the Indiana University Libraries.

Who will receive my question?

Your question will go to the Reference Department in the Main Library and be handled by librarians and full time staff (Our email address is libref@indiana.edu). If it is best answered at another library location, *your question will be forwarded to that location* and you will be copied on the message.

What kinds of questions can I ask?

Any question you might ask at a reference desk in any of our libraries. At the Main Library Reference Desk that might include:

- where should I begin to look for information on this topic? (in the Libraries, in networked resources and on the Internet)
- I have looked in all the usual places, where else might I look?
- can you supply me with an address (a quotation source, a correct citation, a historical fact, biographical fact, et al.)
- Does the library have an expert in this (field, language, subject area, service area....) who might help me with _____?

And just about anything else, in support of research and instruction; only the submission of *lists* of items (e.g. addresses) is *not* appropriate; any single query will be responded to as quickly as possible and always within 24 hours.

URL:http://www.indiana.edu/~libweb/question.html
Comments: libweb@www.indiana.edu
Copyright 1997-1999, The Trustees of Indiana University

http://www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP/PUBSERV/eref.html

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND LIBRARIES

Ask a Librarian

Before you submit a question, please review our list of Frequently Asked Questions.

- Who can use this service?
- What kinds of questions can I ask through this service?
- What if my question is more in-depth? How can I get help with my research?
- How do I connect to databases from off-campus?
- How can I find out if the Libraries own a particular item?
- What if the item I need isn't owned by the Libraries?
- When are the Libraries open?

To reply to your question we require the following information:

Name:

E-mail address:

Department or school: Aerospace Engineering

Status: University of Maryland Student (undergraduate)

Please type your reference question in the box below.

This information will no longer be useful to me after: 1 WEEK

Send your question

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OnLine Reference Service (OWL)

OWL, Online With Libraries, is a service of the MIT Libraries that offers electronic reference help. OWL is especially effective when you need information about library services and collections, quick factual information, or verification of bibliographic references.

You may ask a reference question at any hour and you will usually receive an answer by the end of the next business day.

Answers to the most frequently asked questions are available at http://libraries.mit.edu/faq.html

There are two ways of using OWL:

1. The Web

Click on "Ask a Reference Question" on the following library home pages, or go there directly via the links below:

This service is for the MIT Community only.

- Aeronautics and Astronautics Library
- Barker Engineering Library
- Dewey Library (management and social sciences)
- Humanities Library
- Lindgren Library (earth, atmospheric, and planetary sciences)
- Music Library
- Rotch Library (architecture and planning)
- Rotch Visual Collections
- Science Library

2. Athena

At the Athena prompt, type:

add library;owl

You will see the Libraries' welcome message.
To ask a question, type:

ask

If your question does not fit the listed topics, choose the one that seems closest, or general.

webmaster@libraries.mit.edu
02 May 97

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Otto G. Richter Library

University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida

~ *Ask the Librarian* ~

Reference Department, Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami

---

Welcome. Before you send us your question, we have a few points for you to consider. This will help us respond to your question accurately and in a timely fashion.

1. Have you framed your question as specifically as possible? (This will save time and help us provide an accurate answer.)

Examples:
* Do you have the *Miami Herald* on microfilm for 1941?
* Do you have any books or periodicals on small business management?
* Do you have English language journals in nuclear physics for the past three years?

2. Before you contacted us, where did you search for answers to your question? This will help us interpret your question and it will keep us from covering ground you have covered. You might want to access our online catalog IBISWeb

3. Keep in mind that the questions we can answer are related to South Florida and the academic areas taught at the University of Miami.

Also, please provide the following information in your request :

- Your Name
- Full address
- Telephone number
- Affiliation with the University of Miami (Alumnus, Faculty, Graduate Student, Undergraduate, Staff, other).

We will try to respond to your question within 24 hours, with at least a preliminary answer.

ASK THE LIBRARIAN at

richter.library@miami.edu

Otto G. Richter Library, 1300 Memorial Drive,
University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida 33124
305-284-3551 Voice
305-665-7352 Fax
URL: http://www.library.miami.edu

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University Library • ***The University of Michigan***

Ask Us!

Ask-Us provides reference services via e-mail by University of Michigan Library staff.

Here are some examples of how to use this service:

- ask questions about the University Library's resources, services and facilities
- ask for help with quick lookups of facts, addresses, statistics, parts of bibliographic citations, etc.
- get suggestions about how to research a specific topic or locate particular kinds of information
- obtain information about the University Library resources and services

For more complex questions, please talk to us in person at any reference desk or by telephone at (734)764-9373.

To get your question answered as quickly as possible, please review the "Frequently Asked Questions" listed below.

✔ Need a dissertation?
Information on obtaining UM and non-UM dissertations.

✔ Having problems connecting to MIRLYN?
Frequently encountered connection problems, and who to contact for help.

✔ Need software for access to MIRLYN remotely?
Instructions for acquiring software for connecting to MIRLYN from off-campus.

✔ Renewing a book or questions about borrowing materials?
Information on using and checking-out UM Library materials.

✔ Researching the history of the University of Michigan or UM alumni?
Contacts for information on UM history and UM alumni.

✔ Looking for a particular Library form?
Links to book renewal, interlibrary loan, request for purchase, and other Library forms.

Still have a question? Please fill out the appropriate "Ask Us" question form below.

Please note: Priority is given to requests from UM faculty, staff, students, and alumni; priority is also given to questions which concern the University of Michigan or any unique resource of the University of Michigan Libraries. Other questions will be handled as time permits or referred to other appropriate services.

University of Michigan faculty, staff, and students, please submit your question here.

University of Michigan alumni, please submit your question here.

Others, please submit your question here.

URL: http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/askus/
Direct questions or concerns about the Library Web pages to:
ask-us@umich.edu
Last updated 5/13/99

http://www.lib.msu.edu/services/emailref/vref.htm

Michigan State University Libraries

Virtual Reference Services

hours | services | service request forms | electronic resources | virtual reference | lib home

Your question will be directed to Main Library Reference staff. A response time of two or fewer business days is our goal.

Reminder: E-mail reference service is for the use of the **students, faculty, and staff of Michigan State University** and for **staff and officials of the Government of the State of Michigan only**. Exceptions will be made for questions specifically pertaining to Michigan State University.

How can we contact you?

Note: Persons affiliated with Michigan State University must supply their University e-mail address.

Email address (required): _____ (ex: janedoe@pilot.msu.edu)

First name (optional): _____

Last name (optional): _____

FAX (optional): _____

What is your affiliation with MSU? (required)

- ○ Undergraduate student
- ○ Graduate student
- ○ Faculty
- ○ Staff/Administration
- ○ State Government
- ○ None (My question pertains specifically to Michigan State University.)

What is your reference question?

To help us answer your question, please be as specific as possible. Include the following information if appropriate:

- Keywords?
- Names of people?
- Geographical area (country, county, city, region)?
- Dates?
- MSU Course number?
- Sources you've already checked?

To assist us in suggesting appropriate resources, please describe your interest in your topic:

Detailed research Introductory or background research

General interest Other [Please specify: _____]

To assist us in evaluating this service, please supply the following information:

Are you sending this inquiry from:

Location on MSU East Lansing campus

Off-campus location

[Zip code: _____]

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

How did you learn of this service?

- ○ Contact with MSU Library staff member
- ○ MSU publicity (e.g., *News Bulletin*)
- ○ Informal word of mouth
- ○ Library WWW page
- ○ Used it before
- ○ Other [Please specify:

Send question | Cancel question and reset form

Last updated: May 18, 1999

Send comments to page editor

MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution

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Centennial Science & Engineering Library

Ask-A-Librarian Form

Our goal is to answer your questions within 24 hours. E-mail is an appropriate method for getting simple factual answers or information on the Centennial Science & Engineering Library and its resources. For more involved research problems and questions, we invite you to come in and speak with a Reference Librarian. [Centennial Library Hours]

STEP ONE:

Your Name: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Department: _____

Your Status:
[◉ Undergrad Student] [○ Graduate Student] [○ Faculty] [○ Staff] [○ Not Affiliated with UNM]

Please enter your question here:

SEND RESET

UNMGL HOME CSEL HOME

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Last updated/modified 08/21/99

This page URL is: /~csel/ask_a_librarian.html

Comments to the CSEL WebMaster: John Benedetto -- jbenedet@unm.edu

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http://www.library.upenn.edu/forms/reference.html

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA LIBRARY

Ask a Reference Question

Usage Guidelines

If you prefer calling reference, link here for **phone numbers of reference services** in Penn's libraries.

Request Information:

- Your Name:
- E-Mail Address:
- Department/School:
- Status: (Choose a status)
- Subject Area: General/Miscellaneous (Van Pelt)

Reference Question:

Send Request
Clear Request

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Last update: Thursday, 04-Feb-1999 09:00:41 EST
Send mail concerning this page to: library@pobox.upenn.edu

http://listserv.temple.edu/archives/refdesk.html

Archives of REFDESK@LISTSERV.TEMPLE.EDU

Paley Library Reference Desk

- Search the archives
- Post to the list
- Join or leave the list (or change settings)
- Manage the list (list owners only)

- October 1999
- September 1999
- August 1999
- July 1999
- June 1999
- May 1999
- April 1999
- March 1999
- February 1999
- January 1999
- December 1998
- November 1998
- October 1998
- November 1995
- October 1995
- September 1995
- August 1995
- July 1995

Back to the LISTSERV.TEMPLE.EDU archive index.

CataList
Powered by LISTSERV

RefQuest: Ask a Reference Question

Note: These forms have been developed for Netscape Navigator 1.1N or later. They will currently *not* work with Microsoft Internet Explorer 2.0 or 3.0, or Lynx connections. We recommend that you download the latest version of Netscape Navigator.

Please note: the following service is available to Yale-New Haven Medical Center and Yale University affiliates **only.**

Information about asking reference questions through RefQuest.

Use the space below to describe the specific information you are seeking:

---

2. Patron Information

- Your Name: _____ *(required)*
- ID Type*(required)* (help) :

  ◉ Yale ID. #: _____ *(format: xxxxxxxxx)*
  ○ Library ID. #: _____ *(format: xx-xxxx-x)*
  Library ID type: ○ MED ○ VIS

- Yale Departmental Affiliation: _____ *(required)*

---

3. Communication preferences

Communication method preferred: (click in one circle)*(required)*

E-mail address: _____

Telephone: _____ *(formats: x-xxxx, xxx-xxxx or xxx-xxx-xxxx)*

Best times to reach you by phone, (between 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., weekdays):

_____

Matt Wilcox
Revised: 24 July 1998
Other Questions? Reference Department | Webmaster
© Copyright 1999. Yale University. All rights reserved.

Site URL: http://www.med.yale.edu/library/

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http://info.library.yorku.ca/yorkline/YUAsked/yuasked.htm

York University Libraries

YUasked - Electronic Reference Service

Last updated April 06, 1999

This service is available to York Students, staff and faculty.

Answers to brief reference questions are provided through the Electronic Reference Service. E-mail reference is ideal for obtaining brief, factual information. More complex questions may need to be discussed in person at the library, but we will try to provide you with initial suggestions to begin your search.

The mailbox will be checked Monday through Friday when the library is open. You will receive a response by 5 p.m. the next weekday.

Please send your reference question to:

Scott Library	Social Sciences, Humanities, and Fine Arts
Archives and Special Collections	Archival records of York University, faculty, staff, and student organizations. Canadian Pamphlet Collection and archival materials focussing on Canadian writers, the fine arts in Canada, (notably dance, film and theatre), and civic reform movements.
Business and Government Publications Library	Business and government publications, including Canada, Ontario, Statistics Canada and international organizations, etc.
Bibliotheque Frost Library	Glendon campus - Bilingual services. Social Sciences and Humanities / Sciences sociales et lettres
Law Library	Law and law related
Map Library	Cartographic information, maps, and atlases
Sound and Moving Image Library	Music, film, and video
Steacie Science Library	Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, Medicine and Kinesiology, Physics, Astronomy and Space Science.

Back to the Online Requests page

Back to York University Libraries home page

SPEC Kit 251
Electronic Reference Service

Electronic Reference Policies, Reports, and Statistics

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
MEMORANDUM

February 9, 1999

TO Reference Coordinating Committee

RE Electronic Reference

FR. Eileen McIlvaine, Jill Parchuck, Vivian Sukenik, Jane Winland

Electronic reference was introduced as a CLIO Plus option in November 1994. Today many library users communicate electronically with individual libraries and librarians with reference questions, but the focus of the following report is centered on the CLIO Plus/ LibraryWeb services. We have based our recommendations on a review of questions received by Humanities and History, Science, and Social Science options.

QUESTIONS RECEIVED

	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	% Change
H&H	415	325	203	157	-62%
Science	119	68	29	26	-78%
Social Sci.	180	130	91	74	-58%

USER PROFILE

	Faculty	Grad.Students	Undergrads
H&H	8%	38%	20%
Science	8%	42%	4%
Soc.Sci.	10%	34%	20%

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS

	?Sent 9-5	Locate Journal	Book/Journal Recommendation
H&H	68%	9%	13%
Sci.	73%	23%	19%
Soc. Sci.	60%	14%	19%

In summary, many questions are sent between 9am-5pm, when libraries are open and have staff

available to answer questions. Graduate students are the primary users of the service, and many questions relate to locating specific journals or recommending book and journal purchases. A review of questions received by Starr and Avery show that Starr's usage patter is similar to those mentioned above while Avery's number of questions declined by 18%, and they had more questions sent between 5pm-midnight. We expect that the drop in the number of questions can be attributed to the increased use of electronic services by the end user, the difficulty users have in finding how to use electronic reference via LibraryWeb, and the overall feeling by users that they can find what they need by themselves on the internet.

We reviewed written summaries of electronic reference activity in the most heaviest used Divisions, and found that librarians feel this service is part of their regular reference routine. Many librarians continue to emphasize the value of face-to-face interactions with individual users, but we see strong support for improving and marketing the service too. Therefore, we would like to recommend that this service be continued supported by an effective publicity program. We recommend the following as a starting place for further discussion in the Reference Coordinating Committee:

- LibraryWeb implementation of this interactive service should include an easy way to get directly to electronic reference. We would like connectivity via a URL that is easy to remember: http://www.columbia.edu/libraries/ask. The URL could be printed on bookmarks and signs that direct students to the service, particularly when reference desks are closed.
- The LibraryWeb entry screen should have Ask a reference question or some method of communication with library staff as one of its major options on the first screen.
- We recognize that the use of Notes files will be required in the future, but we recommend continuing the service on CLIO Plus as well as LibraryWeb with the proviso that we continue to seek easier ways to collect, answer, and retain these questions.
- Staff at service desks should be trained in how to use and when to recommend the service to users.
- Individual library websites should have a link to this service.
- Reference Coordinating should decide whether electronic reference should be a direct link or whether a link should be directed to the full range of interactive services on Library Web.
- Reference Coordinating should discuss and make recommendations on how statistics on electronic reference should be maintained in the future.
- The Quarterly Statistics Report for Public Service Units should be changed to reflect electronic questions received. The Committee should discuss if and how CLIO Plus. Library Web, and email questions sent to individuals people or libraries should be recorded and reported.

attachments

Electronic Reference in the Sciences

It seems that electronic reference has been being done in the Sciences since long before the Interactive Services were introduced on CLIO Plus. When the small number of Electronic Reference questions was pointed out, the response was that most of our e-ref questions do not come to us through CLIO Plus or the Web, but directly from our faculty and graduate students via e-mail, telephone, or phone mail. In a smaller community, it is more likely that these two groups of users will know the librarian in the library they most often frequent. Since the electronic reference files do not indicate the person who will be answering the questions posted there, faculty and graduate students are more inclined to ask questions of someone whom they know and who has worked with them in the past.

The CLIO Plus and Web interactive services have presented us with a modest number of questions which are distributed through out the division. The work load from this source has been relatively light in the last year and the questions mostly general in nature - what databases do we have, where to look for information on a specific subject, how to connect from home. Most of the librarians agree that it is a means of communication that is important to our work and expect that it will increase in volume as time goes on and more of our services become remotely accessed. It also allows librarians to use time more effectively and prepare complete and well considered answers to each question even at busy times of the academic year when in-person contact is at its highest.

Criticism of the service were of two types. The software is thought to be "clunky" and does not always give users an opportunity to express a question in adequate detail. Linking the responses to the questions does not always work and some questions come from users who are not Columbia affiliates and are therefore not eligible to use the service. For these we need a "canned answer", but still, these questions are an expenditure of time that librarians would rather not have to deal with. The second criticism is that the question must be rather simple to answer in order to complete an answer in one message. Most questions of a more complex nature require a dialog between user and librarian which is more easily and quickly carried out in the library than through a series of e-mails. The patron is, in these cases, usually advised to come to the library and discuss the question in person or use reference materials that require some instruction or are not remotely available (CD-ROMs or printed material.) Not all questions are best addressed in the e-ref format.

Electronic Reference Review
Notes Ref-Lehman
11/1/97 through 10/31/98
(Questions 569 through 688)

1. Questions submitted in Social Sciences category: 74
   Prior years: 1994/5 = 180
   1995/6 = 130
   1996/7 = 91
2. Questions referred to another category coordinator: N/A

3. Time questions submitted:
   9am - 5pm: 44 (60%)
   5pm - 10pm: 21 (28%)
   10pm - 9am: 9 (12%)

4. Questions needing follow-up: N/A

5. Questions related to locating a journal: 10 (14%)

6. Recommendations for purchase of a book or journal: 14 (19%)

7. Questions related to access or use of an electronic information service: 10 (14%)

8. Questions from faculty: 15 (20%) (12 purchase/2 electronic resource/1 journal location)

9. Other Significant Trends:
   a. Questions
      Questions related to finding journal articles on a topic: 9 (12%)
      Questions related to locating a known item (i.e. complete or partial citation given): 7 (10%)
         Questions related to finding statistics: 4 (5%)
         Questions related to locating/acquiring a dissertation: 3 (4%)

   b. Users
      Total number of unique users: 60
      Number of users listed in CUNIX directory: 44
         faculty users = 6 (10%)
         graduate students = 20 (34%)
         undergraduates = 12 (20%)
         staff = 6 (10%)
         unidentified = 16 (26%) (most of these seem to be Columbia users, i.e. can be "fingered" in CUNIX)
      Number of repeat users: 6 (10%)

Social Sciences Division Electronic Reference

The reference librarians in the Social Sciences Division met to discuss the operation of electronic reference. Following are some of the issues that were raised:

Area Studies librarians do not collect data on electronic reference separately. They report a single number for all reference transactions.

The Journalism Librarian gets 2 or 3 electronic reference questions per day sent directly to her, i.e. not to the electronic reference address.

There was once a delay in receiving an electronic reference question during a period when one of the libraries was closed to the public. This may have been a glitch but when it happens, we can't respond quickly enough and problematic situations can arise, particularly in access and circulation units. Should any access questions be sent directly to the access librarian and not the "ref" email address?

Most said that they have received reference questions forwarded by others. These, therefore are not necessarily coming in or being counted as electronic reference. Is this process acceptable? If so, do we need to count such questions?

Many questions convey the fact that users don't know about periodical indexes or how to find journals.

Some groups of users aren't using electronic reference much at all. Could this be related to the fact that they don't use CLIO Plus very much? Would it be used more in the webbed version or if we marketed it more?

Should a different name be used for the service? Something more direct like "ask us" or "talk to us?" If the title were more inviting, would it be used more?

The delay in providing answers to questions may not instill confidence in the service

Electronic Reference Review
Notes Ref-Sci
11/1/97-10/31/98

1. Questions submitted in the Science/Engineering catagory: 26
   Prior years: 1994/95: 119
   1995/96: 68
   1996/97: 29

2. Questions referred to another catagory: 1 (4%)

3. Time questions submitted:
   9AM-5PM: 19 (73%)
   5PM-10PM: 6 (23%)
   10PM-8AM: 1 (4%)

4. Questions needing follow-up: 1 (4%)

5. Questions relating to locating a journal: 6 (23%)

6. Recommendations for purchase of a book or journal: 5 (19%)

7. Questions related to access of use of an electronic information service: 4 (15%)

8. Questions from faculty: 2 (8% - both searches for a journal)

9. Other significant trends:
   Drop in total number of questions since 1994/95 from 119 to 26 in 1997/98 (78%).
   Drop in percentage of reference questions since 1994/95, from 80% of total to 38% of total.
   Increase in percentage of questions related to electronic resources from 3% in 1994/95 to 15% in 1995/96.
   Continued strong use for recommendations for purchase of books.

10: Users:
   Total number of unique users: 20; Number of users in CUNIX Directory: 18
   Faculty: 2(8%) (one assistant professor, one emeritus professor)
   Graduate students: 11(42%); Undergraduates: 1 (4%)
   Staff: 7 (27%); Researchers: 2 (8%)
   Other : 1(4%) (continuing ed student); Unknown : 2 (8%)
   Number of repeat users: 3(15%)

Electronic Reference Review – 2

Notes "reference@columbia.edu"

11/1/97 through 10/31/98

1. Total questions submitted: 288
2. Number requesting CUL info: 224 (78%)
3. Requests from Columbia readers: 45 (16%)
4. Requests from outside USA: 58 (20%)
5. Questions related to locating a thesis or master's essay: 34 (12%)
6. Number referred to other departments: 160 (56%)

RBML: 36 (13%)
Business: 18 (7%)
DSC: 3 (1%)
LIO: 8 (3%)
Columbiana: 4 (1%)
Law: 2 (1%)
HSL: 12 (4%)
Lehman/SW: 7 (2%)
TC: 4 (1%)
Avery: 13 (5%)
Music: 4 (1%)
CUPress: 9 (3%)
Barnard: 1 (1%)
ACIS: 1 (1%)
ILL: 8 (3%)
Milstein: 3 (1%)
LSO: 5 (2%)
Sc/Eng: 5 (2%)
Butler Bibl: 8 (3%)
Tech Serv: 1 (1%)

7. Number referred to Internet Public Library (IPL): 20 (7%)

   Questions not relating to Columbia specifically can be characterized as general questions about a topic, e.g. business, science, literature.

8. Where questions originated:

Ref: 74 (26%)
Consultant: 106 (37%)
LIO: 28 (10%)
LSO: 13 (5%)
LibWeb: 5 (2%)
ACIS: 7 (2%)
WebClio:13 (5%)
Avery: 8 (3%)
Butlsugg: 2 (1%)
EMcIlvaine: 14 (5%)
Butler Depts: 12 (4%)
(Admin/RBML/ILL)

A Mills 1.8.99

Electronic Reference Review

Notes Ref-Ref
11/1/97 through 10/31/98

1. Total questions submitted: 157
   Questions in Butler Ref. category: 119 (76+)

   Prior years: 1994/5: 415
   1995/6: 325
   1996/7: 203

2. Questions referred to another category: 38 (24+)

3. Time questions submitted:
   9am - 5pm: 107 (68+)
   5pm - 10pm: 32 (20+)
   10pm - 9am: 18 (12+)

4. Questions needing follow-up/consultation: 3 (2+)

5. Questions related to locating a journal: 14 (9+)

6. Questions related to locating a thesis: 1

7. Recommendations for purchase of a book or journal: 21 (13+)

8. Questions related to access or use of an electronic information service: 14 (9+)

9. Questions from faculty: 13 (8+)
   (4 purchase/6 elec. resource/2 journal/1 subject related)

10. Other Significant Trends:
    a. Questions
       Subject related: 86 (55+)
       Library related: 38 (24+)

    b. Types of users:
       Faculty: 13 (8+)
       Grad. Students: 60 (38+)
       Undergrads: 30 (20+)
       Staff: 13 (8+)
       Librarians: 8 (5+)
       Unidentified: 33 (21+)

A Mills 12.22.98

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REFERENCE DEPARTMENT
WALTER ROYAL DAVIS LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
July 2, 1999

GUIDELINES FOR EMAIL REFERENCE

1. The email reference site is checked Monday through Friday as part of regular operations, usually twice a day.

2. While an answer cannot be guaranteed within a specific time frame try to respond within 24 hours, if only to let the person know that the question has been received and is being worked on.

3. Email reference service is intended for brief factual questions and questions about library holdings and services that can be answered quickly online (for example, phone numbers, addresses, verification of titles, general descriptions of holdings, etc.).

4. Email reference is not intended for research questions, for interlibrary loan requests, or for compiling or checking bibliographies.

5. Email reference is not limited either to a defined user group, or to a geographic area. If a question arrives at the email site and is within scope it receives a response.

6. The email reference site is handled by one person who coordinates forwarding questions to the appropriate person, to special collections, or to other library/university departments or agencies.

Electronic Reference Guidelines

When determining how to respond to an e-mail reference question, try to be guided by some of the policies and/or informal guidelines which have been established over the years for our current modes of reference service, ranging from telephone and in-person assistance from the Information Desks to consultations with an appropriate subject specialist. Remember that we always have the option to seek out some guidance from another librarian, including the specialist in a given field on how to proceed, but do not automatically refer all questions relating to a particular area to the subject specialist.

1. Once the inquiries have been divided and forwarded to the three libraries participating in the electronic reference service, (Davis Centre, Dana Porter, and University Map and Design), your responses will probably fall into one of these categories:

a. factual data

Provide brief factual data to inquiry.; if reference tools are used to obtain the data, quote title, location, and call number in your response.

b. recommended course of action to take regarding search strategy

Provide some basic advice regarding search strategy, such as appropriate LC subject headings in WATCAT, suggestions for some relevant indexes/abstracts, and/or other reference tools when appropriate, (when listing any titles, include location and call number). It is important as well to state that help is available from staff at the Information Desk and to encourage the individual to come in for some assistance. The intention here is not to go on for "pages" giving detailed information, but just to give some very basic "starter" help. In some cases it might also be possible and useful to do a file transfer of library publications, etc. pertinent to the topic Note: for some questions it may be obvious that the individual needs to clarify their needs before ANY recommendations re reference strategy is given; in such situtations the best response would be to advise that they just come in and ask for assistance at the Information Desk, (include telephone number as well.)

c. recommended that inquirer contact a subject specialist for a consultation, or the services of another department, such as User Services

Do not forward the question on e-mail to the subject specialist or other department, as it is not always be clear that an individual will be available to respond within 24 hours; when responding with referral to another librarian, give name, subject specialization, telephone number and e-mail number and recommend they contact this person for a consulation; when referring them to another department, give department name and telephone number.

d. inquiries that should be handled by ILL

At this time it is not clear the best way to handle these inquiries as the question of all ILL ids has not been resolved. For the time being, assume that such queries should be printed out and sent up to the ILL Office.

2. Some reference questions we receive may be inappropriate for us to answer via e-mail. For these a typical response might be to recommend that the person come to the library for any needed assistance at the appropriate Information Desk. Some types of these questions might be:

a. requests for detailed statistical, medical or legal information

b. requests for catalogue searches of more than five titles, detailed and prolonged searches of indexes

- Examples of Questions to be forwarded immediately to Davis or UMD

*Do you have a journal called **Civil Engineering**?*

How do I search Medline?

Do you have a detailed map of Iraq?

- Examples of factual data questions

What is the name and extension of the librarian responsible for Philosophy?

*Do you have a book called **Family Relations**?*

Can you give me the telephone number of a person that lives in Chicago?

- Example of a search strategy question

Do you have any books on gender differences?

We have many books on this topic. To provide you with satisfactory response to this query, we would need to know more about your specific topic, such as perspective, etc. I suggest that you come to the Dana Porter Information Desk, to receive person-to-person assistance.

Attached to this message is a list of the hours that the information desk is staffed.

Over e-mail I can only give you a basic suggestion that could start you in the right direction. You can use the Library of Congress Subject Headings List to determine the appropriate words to use when doing a subject search of Watcat. A copy of this four volume work is located on the counter behind the information desk. The LC subject heading given for gender differences is 'sex differences.' Try doing a subjecat search in WATCAT entering "sex differences."

- Example of a search strategy question

I need journal articles for a paper I am doing on pollution and the greenhouse effect.

You will need to come in and search our periodical indexes. Please come to the Dana Porter Information Desk for assistance.

Attached to this message is a list of the hours that the information desk is staffed.

One useful index for this topic is **Environment Abstracts**, call number ABS TD172.E48x Porter. If you require a comprehensive search, try the electronic version of this index on CD-ROM. Ask for details and assistance at the information desk.

- Referral to a subject specialist:

How do I find information on the relationship between Plato and Socrates?

An adequate response to this query cannot be conveyed over e-mail. I recommend that you make an appointment with Christine Jewell, Specialist Librarian for Philosophy (Liboff69@Watserv1, ext. 3703, Dana Porter Reference Department.)

Attached to this message is a research guide for Philosophy, which lists reference materials that the library has for Philosophy.

- Referral to User Services

I received a notice for an overdue book, but I returned that book last week.

Queries regarding overdue books are handled by staff in the User Services Department. Please contact them at extension 4883.

- Referral to Interlibrary Loan

I ordered a book through Interlibrary Loan, and am still waiting for it. How much longer will it take?

Queries regarding Interlibrary Loans are handled by the ILL staff. Please contact them at extension 2598, or visit their office on the 5th floor of the Dana Porter Library.

Attached to this message is the listing of hours that the ILL Department is open to the public.

- Referral to Systems

How do I access Watcat with a modem?

Attached to this message is our handout describing dial-in access to Watcat. If you have further questions, please contact our Systems Department, at extension 2405

Thank-you for using our E-Ref service
Dana Porter Reference
cj

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO LIBRARY ELECTRONIC REFERENCE SERVICE STATISTICS					
DATE					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Electronic Forward					
Simple Referral					
Factual < 5 minutes					
Factual > 5 minutes					
Course of Action < 5 minutes					
Course of Action > 5 minutes					
> 10 minutes (indicate time)					
other					

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
library
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 24, No. 1
March 1993

Electronic Reference Service

The University of Waterloo Library is pleased to announce the establishment of an electronic reference service beginning March 22, 1993. Any member of the UW academic community with access to an e-mail system can ask a question using e-mail. This service is meant for brief factual questions only. It is not intended to replace the need for direct in-person instructional assistance, or the need for an individual to come into the Library to do any in-depth research.

Librarians at the Dana Porter, Davis Centre, and University Map and Design Libraries will participate in providing this service. A staff member will check the central "mailbox" each morning, Monday through Friday, by 9:30 a.m. and reply within 24 hours. The response provided will be either the information requested, or a statement that the inquiry is one which requires more in-depth research than can be responded to by e-mail, with a recommendation that the inquirer come into the Library for further assistance.

The new electronic reference service is complementary to the information service available at the Information Desks. The in-person service includes on-the-spot assistance and instruction, as well as the option of making an appointment for more in-depth consultation with the relevant Liaison Librarian. The new service provides an alternative means of communication and will probably be appreciated by users who have been frustrated by busy signals or unanswered phones when calling the Information Desk for some specific piece of information. Another advantage is that messages can be sent at any time during the day or night that the inquirer has access to e-mail and is not dependent upon the hours that the Information Desk is staffed.

Other electronic library services include WATCAT (the University of Waterloo's online catalogue) and access to other catalogues and services through UWinfo. Plans are in process for providing e-mail access to the ILL (Interlibrary Loan) service. Also, computerized indexes and abstracts in CD-ROM format for a wide variety of subject areas are available in the UW Library.

Instructions for Submitting Questions

1. Use your computer to access your e-mail mailbox and follow the appropriate protocol for sending a message.

2. The e-mail address for this service is ask@lib.uwaterloo.ca. Type your question and send it to this address.

3. The mailbox will be checked at 9:30 each morning, Monday through Friday, and responded to within 24 hours.

For further information about ask@lib.uwaterloo.ca or any other electronic services, please contact Margaret Hendley, x3992 or liboff16@watserv1.uwaterloo.ca; Joan Macdonald, x3319 or liboff25@watserv1.uwaterloo.ca; or Richard Pinnell, x3412 or liboff26@watserv1.uwaterloo.ca. (See UWinfo and over for the list of liaison librarians).

Harvey Cushing/
John Hay Whitney
Medical Library

Information About Asking a Reference Question

Go directly to the RefQuest form.

RefQuest allows you to ask simple factual questions electronically and to receive answers quickly. RefQuest is ideal for answers to brief, factual questions, such as the address of a publisher, verification of a bibliographic citation, or hints for searc hing electronic databases. Questions should include a mention of the context and a brief description of pertinent details.

If you need answers to more than one question, send them as separate e-mail messages or on separate electronic forms. Longer, more in-depth questions cannot be handled through RefQuest. Please come to the Library's Information Desk between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Schedule an appointment with a reference librarian or see our class schedule, available at the Information Desk.

The RefQuest mailbox is checked daily (Monday through Friday) by 11:00 a.m. Answers or follow-up questions (in case clarification is necessary) will be sent within 24 hours, Monday through Friday. Questions sent on a Saturday or Sunday will be answered by Tuesday.

You may also send your reference question by e-mail to reference@biomed.med.yale.edu.

This service is provided for the Yale community and its affiliates.

Go toRefQuest.

Index | *Search this site* | *Medical Library* | *Suggestions* | *Other Yale sites* | *Search the Internet*

Jan Glover
Revised: 8 January 1998
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Site URL: http://www.med.yale.edu/library/

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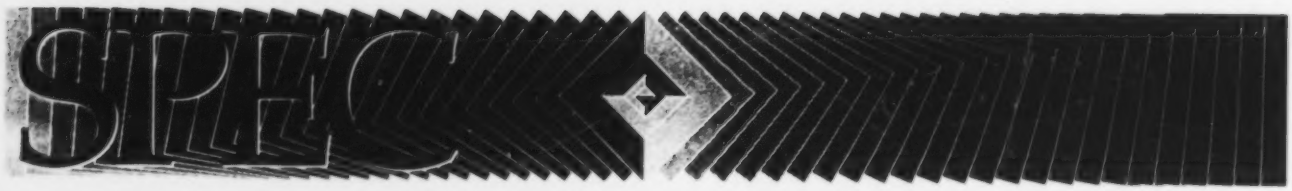

SELECTED RESOURCES

Books and Journal Articles

Abels, Eileen G. "The E-mail Reference Interview: Electronic Mail Library Queries." *RQ* 35, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 345–358.

Abels, Eileen G., and P. Liebscher. "A New Challenge for Intermediary-Client Communication: The Electronic Network." *Reference Librarian* 41/42 (1994).

Bristow, Ann. "Academic Reference Service over Electronic Mail." *College & Research Libraries News* 10 (November 1992): 631–632+.

Bristow, Ann and M. Buechley. "Academic Reference Service Over Electronic Mail: An Update." *College & Research Libraries News* 56 (July/August 1995): 459–62.

Bushallow-Wilbur, Lara, Gemma S. DeVinney, and Fritz Whitcomb. "Electronic Mail Reference Service: A Study." *RQ* 35, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 359–363.

Fishman, Diane L. "Managing the Virtual Reference Desk: How to Plan an Effective Reference E-mail System." *Medical Reference Services Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1–10.

Frank, Ilene B. "E-mail Reference Service at the University of South Florida: A Well-Kept Secret." *Art Documentation* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 8–9+.

Howard, Ellen H., and Terry Ann Jankowski. "Reference Services via Electronic Mail." *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 74 (January 1986): 41–44.

Jensen, Ann M., and Julie Sih. "Using E-mail and the Internet to Teach Users at their Desktops." *Online* (Weston, Conn.) 19 (September/October 1995): 82–86.

Johnson, Pat, and Ann Grusin. "Personal Service in an Impersonal World: Throwing Life Preservers to those Drowning in an Ocean of Information." *Georgia Librarian* 32 (Summer/Fall/Winter 1995): 45–49.

Kisby, Cynthia, Marcus Kilman, and Carole Hinshaw. "Extended Reference Service in the Electronic Environment (Personalized Electronic Research Consultation at the University of Central Florida)." *Information Technology and Libraries* 18, no.2 (June 1999): 92–95.

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Mann, Thomas. "Reference Service, Human Nature, Copyright, and Offsite Service—in a 'Digital Age'?" *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 38 (Fall 1998): 55–61.

Roysdon, C., and L.L. Elliott. "Electronic Integration of Library Services Through a Campuswide Network." *RQ* 28 (Fall 1988): 82–93.

Ryan, S. "Reference Service for the Internet Community: A Case Study of the Internet Public Library Reference Division." *Library & Information Science Research* 18 (1996): 241–259.

Sloan, Bernie. "Electronic Reference Services: Some Suggested Guidelines." *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 38 (Fall 1998): 77–81.

Staley, Laura A. "E-mail Reference: Experiences at City University." *PNLA Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 20–21.

Still, Julie M., and Frank M. Campbell. "Librarian in a Box: The Use of Electronic Mail for Reference." *Reference Services Review* 21, no. 10 (1993): 15–18.

Summers, Robin. "Meeting Education Information Needs Through Digital Reference." *Art Documentation* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 3–4+.

Tibbo, Helen R. "Interviewing Techniques for Remote Reference: Electronic versus Traditional Environments." *American Archivist* 58 (Summer 1995): 294–310.

Websites and Listservs

Digital Reference Listserv: DIG_REF
Send a message with the command: Subscribe DIG_REF yourname to LISTSERV@LISTSERV.SYR.EDU

Hahn, Karla. "An Investigation of an E-mail-Based Help Service." 14 May 1999. <http://www.clis.umd.edu/research/reports/tr97/03/9703.html>.

Lankes, R. David. "Building & Maintaining Internet Information Services." 9 June 1998. <http://ericir.syr.edu/~rdlankes/Diss>.

Philip, Brenda. "An Examination of the Past, Present and Future of Electronic Mail Reference Service." 20 March 1997. <http://www.slis.ualberta.ca/598/brenda/emailref.htm>.

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Sloan, Bernie. "Service Perspectives for the Digital Library: Remote Reference Services." 16 December 1997. <http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/~b-sloan/e-ref.html>.

SPEC KIT ORDER FORM

QTY	TITLE	
_____	SP251	Electronic Reference Service
_____	SP250	TL10: Educating Faculty
_____	SP249	Catalogng of Resrces Digitized
_____	SP248	Licensing of Electronic Prodcts
_____	SP247	Management of Lib Security
_____	SP246	Web Page Devel & Managmnt
_____	SP245	Electronic Reserves Operations
_____	SP244	TL 9: Renovatn & Reconfigurtn
_____	SP243	TL 8: Users with Disabilities
_____	SP242	Library Storage Facilities
_____	SP241	Gifts and Exchange Function
_____	SP240	Marketing and PR Activities
_____	SP239	Mentoring Programs in ARL
_____	SP238	ARL GIS Literacy Project
_____	SP237	Managing Food and Drink
_____	SP236	TL 7: E Theses/Diss
_____	SP235	Collaborative Coll Managmnt
_____	SP234	TL 6: Distance Learning
_____	SP233	ARL in Extension/Outreach
_____	SP232	Use of Teams in ARL
_____	SP231	Cust Service Programs in ARL
_____	SP230	Affirmative Action in ARL
_____	SP229	Evaluating Acad Libr Dirs
_____	SP228	TL 5: Preserving Digital Info
_____	SP227	Org of Doc Coll & Svcs
_____	SP226	TL 4: After the User Survey
_____	SP225	Partnerships Program
_____	SP224	Staff Training & Development
_____	SP223	TL 3: Electronic Scholarly Pubn
_____	SP222	Electronic Resource Sharing

QTY	TITLE	
_____	SP221	Evol & Status of Approval Plans
_____	SP220	Internet Training
_____	SP219	TL 2: Geographic Info Systems
_____	SP218	Info Technology Policies
_____	SP217	TL 1: Electronic Reserves
_____	SP216	Role of Libs in Distance Ed
_____	SP215	Reorg & Restructuring
_____	SP214	Digit Tech for Preservation
_____	SP213	Tech Svcs Workstations
_____	SP212	Non-Librarian Professionals
_____	SP211	Library Systems Office Org
_____	SP210	Strategic Planning
_____	SP209	Library Photocopy Operations
_____	SP208	Effective Library Signage
_____	SP207	Org of Collection Develop
_____	SP206	Faculty Organizations
_____	SP205	User Surveys in ARL Libs
_____	SP204	Uses of Doc Delivery Svcs
_____	SP203	Reference Svc Policies
_____	SP202	E-journals/Issues & Trends
_____	SP201	E-journals/Pol & Proced
_____	SP200	2001: A Space Reality
_____	SP199	Video Collect & Multimedia
_____	SP198	Automating Preserv Mgt
_____	SP197	Benefits/Professional Staff
_____	SP196	Quality Improve Programs
_____	SP195	Co-op Strategies in Foreign Acqs
_____	SP194	Librarian Job Descriptions
_____	SP193	Lib Develop & Fundraising
_____	SP192	Unpub Matls/Libs, Fair Use
_____	SP191	Prov Pub Svcs Remote User
_____	SP190	Chang Role of Book Repair
_____	SP189	Liaison Svcs in ARL Libs
_____	SP188	Intern, Residency & Fellow
_____	SP187	ILL Trends/Staff & Organ
_____	SP186	Virtual Library
_____	SP185	System Migration
_____	SP184	ILL Trends/Access
_____	SP183	Provision of Comp Print Cap
_____	SP182	Academic Status for Libns
_____	SP181	Perf Appr of Collect Dev Libn
_____	SP180	Flexible Work Arrangemts
_____	SP179	Access Services Org & Mgt
_____	SP178	Insuring Lib Colls & Bldgs
_____	SP177	Salary Setting Policies
_____	SP176	Svcs for Persons w/Disabilities
_____	SP175	Scholarly Info Centrs
_____	SP174	Expert Systems
_____	SP173	Staff Recognition Awards
_____	SP172	Information Desks
_____	SP171	Training of Tech Svc Staff
_____	SP170	Organization Charts
_____	SP169	Mgt of CD-ROM
_____	SP168	Student Employment
_____	SP167	Minority Recruitment
_____	SP166	Materials Budgets
_____	SP165	Cultural Diversity
_____	SP164	Remote Storage
_____	SP163	Affirmative Action
_____	SP162	Audiovisual Policies

QTY	TITLE	
_____	SP161	Travel Policies
_____	SP160	Preservation Org & Staff
_____	SP159	Admin of Lib Computer Files
_____	SP158	Strategic Plans
_____	SP157	Fee-based Services
_____	SP156	Automating Authority Control
_____	SP155	Visiting Scholars/Access
_____	SP154	Online Biblio Search
_____	SP153	Use of Mgt Statistics
_____	SP152	Brittle Books Program
_____	SP151	Qualitative Collect Analysis
_____	SP150	Bldg Security & Personal Safety
_____	SP149	Electronic Mail
_____	SP148	User Surveys
_____	SP147	Serials Control/Deselection
_____	SP146	Lib Dev Fund Raising Capabilit
_____	SP145	Lib Publications Programs
_____	SP144	Building Use Policies
_____	SP143	Search Proced Sr LibAdmin
_____	SP142	Remote Access Online Cats
_____	SP141	Approval Plans
_____	SP140	Performance Appraisal
_____	SP139	Performance Eval: Ref Svcs
_____	SP138	University Copyright
_____	SP137	Preservation Guidelines
_____	SP136	Managing Copy Cataloging
_____	SP135	Job Analysis
_____	SP134	Planning Mgt Statistics
_____	SP133	Opt Disks: Storage & Access
_____	SP132	Library-Scholar Communication
_____	SP131	Coll Dev Organization
_____	SP130	Retrospective Conversion
_____	SP129	Organization Charts
_____	SP128	Systems File Organization
_____	SP127	Interlibrary Loan
_____	SP126	Automated Lib Systems
_____	SP125	Tech Svcs Cost Studies
_____	SP124	Barcoding of Collections
_____	SP123	Microcomp Software Policies
_____	SP122	End-User Search Svcs
_____	SP121	Bibliographic Instruction
_____	SP120	Exhibits
_____	SP119	Catalog Maintenance Online
_____	SP118	Unionization
_____	SP117	Gifts & Exchange Function
_____	SP116	Organizing for Preservation
_____	SP115	Photocopy Services
_____	SP114	Binding Operations
_____	SP113	Preservation Education
_____	SP112	Reorg of Tech and Pub Svcs
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